A SERMON

Preached to the

SOCIETY

FOR

Reformation of Manners,

AT

NOTTINGHAM.

On the 25th of *August*, 1698.

By *JOHN WHITLOCK*,
Minister of the Gospel there.

LONDON,
Printed for *John Richards*, Bookseller,
in *Nottingham*, 1699.

3673:79.

TO THE

WORTHY MEMBERS

OF THE

SOCIETY

FOR THE

Reformation of Manners,

IN

The Town and County of the Town of *Nottingham.*

Gentlemen,

SEeing it is upon your Deſire, that I firſt preached and now publiſh this Sermon, I ſhall not make any Apology for appearing in Print on this Occaſion; tho' there are ſo many excellent Sermons by my Reverend Brethren, both Conformiſts

and Nonconformists already published, for the incouraging and exciting both Societies and Persons to, and directing them in that great and good Work you and many others are ingaged in, for the Reformation of Manners. *I am sensible I can add little, if any thing, to what hath already been preached and published upon this Subject; yet was not unwilling to gratifie you in your Desire, seeing hereby I have an Opportunity to give my Testimony to this Work of the Lord, and express my hearty rejoycing in it, and desire of the Advance and Prosperity of it. I shall pray, that God would eminently bless what hath been preached and published concerning this Matter, to all, and especially to you, to incourage your Hearts and strengthen your Hands. You have great Incouragement to go on from the Nature of the Work, which is much for God's Glory; and therefore very pleasing to him, if done*

sin-

ſincerely, from right Principles to right Ends, and in a right Manner: And it may be a means to do good to Souls, in preventing further Sin and Guilt, yea, it may through God's Bleſſing, bring Perſons not only to outward Reformation, but to ſound Converſion; and you may hereby be bleſſed, not only to prevent a Multitude of Sins, but alſo to ſave Souls from Death: And if it ſhould be but one ſingle Soul, that you ſhould thus win, it would be well worth all the Pains you take, and the Difficulties, you are called to encounter with.

And this would be a means to prevent, or remove, publick Judgments, and further the continuing of preſent, and obtaining of more publick Mercies.

And you and others ingaged, have alſo great Incouragement, and great Matter for thankful Acknowledg-

ments

ments to God, on account of his inclining the Hearts of many Magistrates with a Pious, Christian Zeal, to promote this good Work, and also on account of the Success, you as well as others, have been blessed with by God, very discernably, in the considerable Restraint of many Sins.

And further, to excite you to a well-tempered Zeal, and vigorous going on in the Work you have ingaged in. Consider, you know not how little a while you have to work in for God, and your own and others Souls, and for the publick good. God's late Providence should be laid to Heart, and greatly improved by you; that very awful and cutting Stroke, I mean, the Death of that eminent Christian, and eminent Member of your Society, who was so very active for God in his whole Course, and in this Work in particular; Mr. Joseph Barrett, *Grocer, (Son of Mr.* John Barrett,

Barrett, *my dear Fellow-Labourer, and one of your aged Miniſters*) *a great Loſs to the Church, and a more particular Loſs to your Society. I do not know of any private Chriſtian that laid out himſelf more in promoting this Work, both by his Pen and Purſe. How many Letters hath he written to Miniſters and others in* York, Hull, Lincoln, Leiceſter, Coventry, Cheſterfield, *and ſeveral other Places, to excite them to the ſetting on foot this highly neceſſary Work; and God hath ſucceeded his Endeavours already, in ſeveral of thoſe Places: But God hath taken him away in the prime of his Time and Uſefulneſs, in his Entrance upon the* 34th *Year of his Age. I mention this to excite you to the greater Zeal and Activity, that you may ſtand in the wide Gap, and make up the great Breach his Death hath made; and alſo, That whenever your Lord cometh, he may find you ſo doing, intent upon the Work*

he

he has ſet you to, as he did this pretious Servant of his.

I ſhall add no more, but earneſt Prayers for you, and all others ingaged in this Work of Reformation of Manners; *that God would ſtill more and more ſpirit, conduct, ſtrengthen and ſucceed you, which would much rejoice the Heart of,*

Your Obliged,

Nott. Oct. 17, 98.

Affectionate,

Faithful Friend,

and Servant,

J. W.

HOSEA

HOSEA 2. 15.

And I will give her her Vineyards from thence, and the Valley of *Achor* for a Door of Hope.

THESE Words have a neceſſary Dependence upon the Verſe foregoing, as appears from thoſe Words in the Text, *from thence*; that is, from the Wilderneſs, which God had ſaid he would bring her into, and there ſpeak to her heart, that is, ſpeak to her effectually, in order to her Converſion to God, and thorow Reformation after her horrible Apoſtaſie from God; and in the iſſue, ſpeak comfortably to her upon her return to God by Repentance and Reformation. In the firſt Chapter of this Prophecy, and in the former part of this, God had been ſeverely threatning the People of the *Jews*, denouncing Judgments againſt them for their

Idolatry, and other crying Abominations; yet intermixes Exhortations to Repentance, and propheſies and promiſes of giving them Grace to return to him, and of his returning to them in Grace and Mercy, and beſtowing upon them many both Temporal and Spiritual Mercies upon their return to him their only rightful Owner, their firſt Husband. In the ſecond Verſe he calls upon the Members of this Church of the *Jews*, to plead with their Mother. Particular Members of a Church and private Perſons may and ought, to the utmoſt of their Power, and in their places (having begun at home, and firſt reformed themſelves and Families) ſet upon and further publick Reformation: And as God calls on the Members of the Church to plead with their Mother, ſo he himſelf calls on her to put away her Whoredoms and Adulteries, threatning her if ſhe did not, *ver.* 3. 6, 9, to the 13th, and adds Promiſes too of reclaiming her by Afflictions; For tho' the Expreſſions here uſed, look like a Threatning, and are in part ſo, yet they are more a Promiſe than a Threat-

Threatning, in regard of the gracious Iſſue and Effect of it; he ſays he will hedge up her way with Thorns, yet promiſeth this ſhall be the Fruit of it, That ſhe ſhall ſay, *I will go and return to my firſt Husband*, &c. and in the 14th Verſe he ſays, he will bring her into the Wilderneſs, but it was to ſpeak to her Heart effectually, both in way of quickening and Comfort. When in the Wilderneſs ſhe had brought her ſelf into by her Sins, and God had brought her into by his righteous Judgments; God promiſes, That he would then bring her to Repentance and Reformation; and thereupon, would reſtore to her the Mercies ſhe had forfeited by her Sins, and give her the Valley of *Achor* for a Door of Hope. A Valley of ſore trouble, as this Valley of *Achor* was to *Iſrael* at their firſt Entrance into *Canaan*; yet if they did reform, if they did reſtrain and puniſh Sin and Sinners, as *Iſrael* then did, and in that Courſe found, even this Valley to be a Door of Hope to them; ſo it ſhould be with the People of the *Jews* now, if they returned to God.

In theſe Words there is a plain Reference to that Hiſtory, which we

have in the 7th of *Joſhua*; where you have the Relation of *Iſrael*'s being worſted by the Men of *Ai*, upon *Achan*'s Sin there recorded; for which, he and his whole Family were, in this Valley, put to Death, which had this Name, *The Valley of* Achor, given to it; partly from *Iſrael*'s Trouble on the forementioned Account, and partly from *Achan*'s Puniſhment there inflicted on him.

It was a very fruitful Valley between *Jericho* and *Ai*; their entring into which, and partaking of the Fruits of it, was a Door of Hope to them, a Pledge and Earneſt, that God would give them full Poſſeſſion of the Land of *Canaan*: But that Door of Hope was ſhut againſt them for *Achan*'s Sin, till Judgment was executed upon him for it; but upon that being done, this Door of Hope was opened to them again, they ſucceeded againſt *Ai*, and had that given them as a renewed Earneſt of their enjoying *Canaan*.

So God promiſed here in the Text, in the time of *Hoſea*'s prophecying, That tho' the People of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, had by their Apoſtaſie, Idolatry, and many other Sins, brought themſelves into a Wilderneſs, a Valley of *Achor*,

Achor, a very troublous State, and daſhed their Hopes of Mercy; yet if they would (as *Iſrael* did in the Days of *Joſhua*) reform and return to God, reſtrain and puniſh Sin, that ſhould be to them a Door of Hope, that God would return to them in Mercy, and afford them an abundant Affluence of all Mercies temporal and ſpiritual. So that this Text, and what may be gathered from it, affords great Incouragement to all Societies and Perſons, as do ingage to promote Reformation of Manners; by bringing to due legal Puniſhment Sin and Prolaneneſs, Swearing, Drunkenneſs, Uncleanneſs, Sabbath-Profanation, and thoſe things and Practices that are the Cauſes and Occaſions of, and Provocations to theſe and the like Enormities. The Doctrine I ſhall raiſe from theſe Words, and by God's Aſſiſtance ſpeak to, as the time will permit, is this:

(*Doctrine.*) When a People have, by their Sins, brought themſelves into a Wilderneſs-Condition, and into a Valley of *Achor*, into great Troubles and Diſtreſſes; yet if they be brought to Repentance and Reformation, and that Work be effectually ſet about and

carried on, it will be a Door of Hope of God's continuing or reſtoring his gracious Preſence among them, and beſtowing upon them both ſpiritual and temporal Bleſſings. This Doctrine, both what is implied, and what is expreſſed in it, doth clearly ariſe from the Text compared with the Context.

I. One Propoſition implied in the Text and Doctrine is, That the Sins of a People, yea of a profeſſing People, may and often do, bring them into a Wilderneſs-State, a Valley of *Achor*, into great Troubles and Diſtreſſes; the Sins of a People provoke God to bring heavy Judgments upon them, which, tho' to the true People of God, they are intended in Mercy and Iſſue ſo; God uſing their Troubles and Diſtreſſes as ſanctified means, to bring them to Humiliation and Reformation, yet they are ſharp Chaſtenings, and are for the preſent, and to Senſe, a Valley of *Achor*, not *joyous, but grievous*, Heb. 12. 11. This is clear, both from the Hiſtory to which this Expreſſion of the Valley of *Achor* relates, *Joſh.* 7. and from the preſent State of the Church of the *Jews*, in the time when *Hoſea* propheſied. In the Hiſtory *Joſh.* 7. we

we read, That upon *Achan*'s taking the accurſed thing, *a Babyloniſh Garment, and two hundred ſhekels of ſilver, and a wedge of gold of fifty ſhekels weight*, this brought Judgments upon *Iſrael*; ſo that they could not ſtand before the Men of *Ai*: Yea, God expreſly threatens, That he would not be with them any more, unleſs the accurſed were deſtroyed, and Judgment executed upon *Achan* for his Sin, ſo to prevent the like Sin in others for the time to come. And the thing is likewiſe clear, from the Caſe of the Children of *Iſrael*, in the time of this Prophecy: In this Chapter, *ver.* 2—14, and *cap.* 4. *v.* 1, 2, 3. when there is no Truth, nor Mercy, nor Knowledge of God, but ſwearing, lying, committing Adultery, Sabbath-Profanation, and the like break forth, God hath a Controverſy with ſuch a Land, and it ſhall be a Valley of *Achor*, it ſhall mourn.

II. Another Propoſition which may be gathered, both from the Hiſtory *Joſh.* 7. and the State of *Iſrael*, at the time of the delivering this Prophecy, is, That when God hath begun to ſhew Mercy to a People, hath brought them out of great Diſtreſſes, out of an

Egypt, and a Wilderneſs, into a *Canaan*; a pleaſant Land, and fruitful Valleys, ſuch as this Valley of *Achor* was: Yet if a People then fall into provoking Sins, and do not humble themſelves, and reform their evil ways; yea, if every one in their ſeveral Places, do not endeavour to bring Sin and Sinners to Puniſhment, and reſtrain Sin and Profaneneſs in others what they can; it provokes God to turn a fruitful Land into a barren Wilderneſs, a pleaſant Valley into a Valley of *Achor*. Thus it was with *Iſrael* in the time of *Joſhua*: God had delivered them out of *Egypt*, carried them through the Red-Sea, and Wilderneſs, and out of it through *Jordan*, as on dry Land; delivered *Jericho* into their Hands, given them Poſſeſſion, Livery and Seiſin of a fruitful Valley, as a pledge of the full Poſſeſſion of the whole. Theſe were wonderful Appearances of God for them; yet for the Sin of *Achan*, till by their puniſhing him for it, they had cleared themſelves from the Guilt of it, God turned this pleaſant Land and this fruitful Valley, into a Valley of *Achor*, a Valley of great Trouble, and threatens to make it ſtill more and longer ſo, if they

they did not take away from the midſt of them the accurſed thing. And this Propoſition is alſo proved from the Caſe of *Iſrael*, in the time of this Prophet *Hoſea*, who propheſied in the Days of *Jeroboam*, the Son of *Joaſh*, King of *Iſrael*, *cap.* 1. *v.* 1. There was a Door of Hope opened to them in a Valley of *Achor*, in a time of great Trouble to the ten Tribes, as you may ſee, 2 *King.* 14. 25. to the end; the Affliction of *Iſrael* was very bitter, there was not any ſhut up or left, nor any Helper for *Iſrael*; then God ſaved them by the hand of this *Jeroboam* the ſecond, he reſtored the Coaſt of *Iſrael*, as God had foretold by the Prophet *Jonah*; yet by the Sins of *Iſrael*, this Door was ſoon ſhut, and they brought into a Valley of *Achor* again.

III. Another Propoſition, which is that I ſhall moſt inſiſt on, is, That when a People have ſinned themſelves into a Valley of *Achor*, in regard of Trouble, yet if it prove to them as the Valley of *Achor* did to *Iſrael*, a means to bring them to Repentance and Reformation of Manners, yea, both of Heart and Life, and that Work be throughly and effectually carried on, it is, and will be

to

to them a Door of Hope, of the reſtoring of God's gracious Preſence, and his beſtowing temporal and ſpiritual, yea, and Eternal Bleſſings upon them.

Now in handling this Propoſition, I ſhall ſpeak ſomewhat, God aſſiſting, to theſe particulars. (I.) Briefly ſhew what kind of Reformation of Manners that is, which will render a Valley of *Achor* a Door of Hope, and which all muſt endeavour to ſet on foot, and carry on to the uttermoſt, as they would have well-grounded Hopes that it will be ſo. (II.) Prove from Scripture, That the right endeavouring, and much more the effecting ſuch a Reformation, will open a Door of Hope. (III.) Give the Reaſons of it. (IV.) Shew what it will be a Door of Hope of, and (V.) Apply it.

(I.) What kind of Reformation it is, and what Attempts and Endeavours towards it, are thoſe, that will prove a Door of Hope of God's gracious Preſence with, and Bleſſing upon a People.

(1.) The Attempts and Endeavours after Reformation of Manners, that will be a Door of Hope to thoſe that ingage in ſuch a Work, whether Magiſtrates, Miniſters, or private Chriſtians;

ſtians; and whether in Societies, or ſingle Perſons, they muſt be vigorous, unwearied and perſevering, not giving over upon any Diſcouragements they meet with. All that ingage in ſuch a Work as the Reformation of the looſe, profane Manners of a degenerate, debauched Age, had need be furniſhed with holy Courage and Reſolution to go on againſt all Diſcouragements: Weak and faint Endeavours will never prevail againſt ſtrong and rampant Sins, and raging Corruptions. Satan will rage and raiſe Oppoſition, when he ſees his Kingdom ſtruck at and ſhaken; and wicked Men will ſtruggle hard, e'er they will part with their beloved, reigning, pleaſing, profitable Sins that they have been long accuſtomed to, and ſee them dethroned and reſtrained, 2 *Sam.* 23. 6, 7. The Men of *Belial* are ſuch as cannot be taken with Hands, or gentle dealing, but he that toucheth them muſt be fenced with Iron, and the Staff of a Spear. See therefore, all you that ingage in this Work, that you, and your Endeavours for Reformation of Manners be, and pray that they may be, vigorous and unwearied.

(2.) The

(2.) The Reformation that will be a Door of Hope, and which you must endeavour to promote, must be thorow, both in Heart and Life; not a Reformation by halves, not only reforming the gross, outward Acts of more than ordinary heinous, scandalous Sins, such as Swearing, Drunkenness, Uncleanness, open Sabbath-Profanation, and the like; but even those that are lesser Sins, in the Esteem of Men, such as unruly Passions, Covetousness, Pride of Heart and Life, *&c.* These we must pray and endeavour to our utmost the Reformation of, first of all in our selves, and then in others, as ever we would open a Door of Hope for thorow Mercies, especially spiritual and eternal ones: There must be Endeavours to promote a Reformation in our selves and others, of Sins of Omission as well as of Commission: To bring our selves and press others, to the conscientious Performance of Family-Worship, of constant daily reading the Word and Prayer, Morning and Evening; frequent instructing and catechising Children and Servants; strict Sabbath-Sanctification as well as reforming gross Sabbath-Profanation; and the

the Performance of ſecret Duties. It is true, we cannot reform others ſecret and Heart-Sins, the Laws of Men do not reach theſe; but we muſt earneſtly pray for, and preſs this Reformation. Nor can we compel Men, by the Laws of Men, to Family and ſecret Duties, but we muſt exhort to theſe Duties. Thoſe Governours of Families that are known to live in the Neglect of theſe Duties, may as juſtly be kept from Sacraments, as Perſons guilty of outward Acts of Sin, till they give Evidence of their Repentance and Reformation. I grant that even upon the Reformation of Manners, as to outward Acts of groſs and ſcandalous Sins, God may ſuſpend the Execution of temporal Judgments for a time, and may vouchſafe ſome temporal Mercies, as we ſee exemplified in *Ahab*'s Humiliation, and *Nineveh*'s Repentance and preſent Reformation; but theſe were but Reprieves, both in the Caſe of *Ahab*, who afterwards was cut off by an untimely and violent Death, 1 *King.* 22. 34, 35, and ſo it proved with *Nineveh*, as the Prophecy of *Nahum* doth emphatically ſhew. It is only thorow Reformation that can open a Door of Hope, to obtain

tain thorow Mercies, eſpecially ſpiritual ones; this therefore you ſhould be ſure to labour after your ſelves, and pray for, preſs, and endeavour to promote in others, yea, carry on outward Reformation in order to promoting this.

(3.) That Reformation of Manners, which will be an effectual Door of Hope, of obtaining thorow Mercies, eſpecially ſpiritual ones, muſt be a ſincere, unfeigned Reformation, ſuch an one as hath the Heart ingaged in it, ſo as that Sin is not only left but loathed, Duties not only performed but loved and delighted in; Sin forſaken and Duty performed from Principles of Faith and Love. When *Judah* returned not with her whole Heart, but feignedly, *Jer.* 3. 10. out of Complyance with, or Fear of the Laws of Men, Judgment was ſuſpended for a time, during the Life of a good *Joſiah*, but was executed upon *Judah* after his Death: Therefore if any of you be reformed from groſs Sins, ſee it be not only from Fear of Men, or their Laws, or to procure their Favour, but that your Reformation be ſincere and unfeigned, as ever you would have it to be a Door of Hope, of obtaining ſpiritual

tual Mercies, or laſting temporal Mercies.

(4.) That Reformation that will be a Door of Hope of obtaining God's gracious Preſence, and ſpiritual Mercies, yea, temporal Mercies in Mercy muſt proceed from and be accompanied with Faith in Chriſt. Men muſt not only come off from the allowed Practice of Sin, to the Performance of formerly neglected Duties, but they muſt come thorowly home to Chriſt; ſo as not to truſt in their Reformation, as their juſtifying Righteouſneſs, but truſt in Chriſt and his Righteouſneſs alone for their Juſtification; truſt in him, and him alone, as the Lord their only Righteouſneſs and their only Strength, *Iſai.* 45 24. ſo as by Faith to fetch Strength from Chriſt, to forſake Sin, do Duty, and exerciſe Grace, and be able to ſay, as 2 *Cor.* 6. 13. I have believed and therefore have I ſpoken, I have forſaken ſuch Sins, done ſuch Duties, not only for Fear of Puniſhment by the Laws of Men, or to pleaſe Friends, gain Credit among Chriſtians, or ſtop the Mouth of Conſcience; but becauſe I believed the Precepts, Threatnings and Promiſes in the

the Word, yea, do believe in and reſt upon Chriſt for my Juſtification, Sanctification and Salvation; and rely upon him for Strength againſt Sin, and unto Duty and the Exerciſe of Grace. It's true, ſuch a Reformation we cannot produce in others, no, nor in our ſelves neither; for Faith is the Gift of God, but this you may, and ſhould pray for, both for your ſelves and others, and this you ſhould preſs: And Miniſters ſhould in all their Exhortations of People to Reformation, preſs them not to reſt in any thing ſhort of Chriſt, Faith in him, Union to him, and Communion with him, as our Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, Sanctification and Redemption; and let us all ſee, that we take up in no Reformation ſhort of this.

A Reformation in our ſelves and others, thus qualified, will be a great and effectual Door opened to you, of Hope of obtaining ſpiritual and eternal Mercies, yea, and temporal too, ſo far as ſhall be for God's Glory, and your real good.

II. The ſecond General Head is, to prove the Point, That the ſetting upon, and vigorouſly and effectually carrying on

on a Work of Reformation, opens a Door of Hope of God's Preſence in and with, and Bleſſing upon a Place or People. It is abundantly proved out of this Chapter, from many other Texts of Scripture; but the Scripture-Proof, I ſhall refer to three Heads.

(1.) It appears, That when a People are in a Wilderneſs-Condition, in a Valley of *Achor*, and brought into ſuch a State by their Sins; a right and thorow Reformation is the way to make the Valley of *Achor* a Door of Hope, in that God doth in ſuch Caſes, require it as a Duty, and direct to it as a Means to open to a People a Door of Hope, of God's removing Judgments from, and beſtowing Mercies upon a People: Thus, in the ſecond Verſe of this Chapter, he calls upon the Children to plead with their Mother (even private Chriſtians are, in their place, to promote Church-Reformation) and directs what ſhould be done by Churches and particular Members, to prevent or remove Judgments, and obtain Mercies; let her put away her Whoredoms out of her Sight, as the way to prevent the Judgment mentioned in the following Verſes.

(2.) It appears, That ſetting upon, and carrying on thorow Reformation in the Hearts and Lives of Men, is the way to make a Valley of *Achor* a Door of Hope, in that God promiſes to ſend Afflictions on his People, and vouchſafe a ſanctified Uſe of them for this end: Thus the 6th and 7th Verſes of this Chapter look like, and are delivered in the Form of a Threatning for the moſt part of them; but they cloſe with a precious Promiſe, That her having her way hedged up with Thorns, ſhall have this gracious Iſſue and Effect, that ſhe ſhall ſay, I will go and return to my firſt Husband, *&c.* and this was to give her a Door of Hope; ſo God promiſeth, *Pſ.* 89. 30. ——36. He will not take away his Loving-kindneſs, but bring Meat out of the Eater.

(3.) It appears, That God will make a Valley of *Achor* a Door of Hope, when by their Afflictions they are brought to Reformation, in that God hath made many gracious Promiſes, That when a People return to him by thorow Reformation, he will return to them in Mercy. You have many ſuch Promiſes in this Chapter, and

and many other Scriptures; thus in the Text, when the Names of *Baalim* were taken out of her Mouth, then God would give her her Vineyards, ſhe ſhould ſing in the Valley of *Achor*, where before ſhe was troubled and mourned; and in the 18th Verſe, how many Bleſſings are promiſed God would betroth her to him in Righteouſneſs, and Judgments in Lovingkindneſs, and Mercies and Faithfulneſs; and in the end of the Chapter, adds temporal Mercies too, and cloſeth with the beſt at laſt. So 2 *Chr.* 7. 13, 14. *Iſai.* 1. 16, —— 20, and 25, 26. *Jer.* 3. 12, 13, 14, 15, and 22. *Mal.* 3. 10, 11, 12. All theſe Promiſes, and many more ſuch, hath God made to a Peoples thorow Reformation and Return to God.

(4) The Truth of the Doctrine appears from the Inſtances of God's dealing with his People, and the Experiences of God's People to this purpoſe recorded in the Scripture: What they by their Sins, had made to themſelves a Valley of *Achor*, God, when he hath brought them to Repentance and Reformation, hath made a Door of Hope to them; this is clearly proved from

that fore-mentioned 7th of *Joshua*, when *Achan* had sinned in the accursed thing that Valley, which was a Door of Hope of their full possessing the Land of *Canaan*, was turned into a Valley of *Achor*; but when *Israel* reformed and executed Justice upon *Achan*, the Valley of *Achor* became again a Door of Hope to them. Another Instance of this you have in *Judges* the 10th; *Israel* by their Sins, had brought themselves into a Valley of *Achor*, into great Distresses, *ver.* 6, ——10. and yet more, when notwithstanding their Confession, they received that cutting Answer from the Lord, *ver.* 10,——15. yet when they not only confessed and prayed, but heartily reformed, and put away the strange Gods from among them, and served the Lord, then there was a Door of Hope opened to them, and God's Soul was grieved for the Misery of *Israel*, *ver* 16. But so much for the Scripture-Proof of the Doctrine.

(III.) The Third Head propounded to be spoken to, in the handling of the Doctrine, was the Reasons of it.

(1.) One Reason why, when a People that by their Sins have brought themselves, and God for their Sins, hath

hath brought them into a Wilderneſs, and a Valley of *Achor*, into great trouble; yet when Repentance and Reformation are ſet upon, and vigorouſly and effectually carried on, there is a Door of Hope opened them, is, becauſe by true Repentance, and right and thorow Reformation, the deſerving, procuring, Cauſe of God's Judgments and a Peoples Troubles, are removed out of the way. Now the Cauſe being removed, the Effect ceaſes; Sins unrepented of and unreformed, are the Cauſes of God's Judgments on a People, and the great hindrances of God's Mercies to them; theſe are they that bring them into a Valley of *Achor*, and keep them there, that ſhut the Door of Hope, and keep it ſhut againſt them, till they are removed by Faith, Repentance and Reformation. They are the Sins of a People that ſeparate between them and their God, *Iſai.* 59. 2. and cauſe him to hide his Face from them that he will not hear; therefore *Iſrael* could not ſtand before their Enemies, *Joſh.* 7. 12. *Jer.* 5. 24, 25, 26. *Hoſ.* 4. 1, 2, 3. it is for unreformed Sins the Land mourns, and God hath a Controverſy with them; theſe ſhut the

Door of Hope, but when these are removed by a right Reformation, the Door is opened again.

(2.) Another Reason of the Doctrine, is drawn from the Free Grace of God, the Satisfaction and Merit of Christ, and the free and gracious Promises of the Gospel; these are the only moving Causes, the chief ground and reason, why a People's Reformation opens a Door of Hope to them. God's free Grace in making Promises to Repentance and Reformation, and his Truth and Faithfulness in fulfilling them, is the only moving Cause, and Christ's Satisfaction the only meritorious purchasing Cause of a People's Reformation, being a Door of Hope to them; it is not from any Worth or Merit in a returning, reforming People, as tho' they deserved Mercy at God's Hand, or as if their Reformation was any part of their justifying Righteousness; no, that belongs only to the Righteousness of Christ. Sin indeed, is the true and proper, deserving, and meritorious Cause of God's Judgments on People and Persons; and while the allowed Practice of them is continued, shuts the Door of Hope against them, but

our

our Repentance and Reformation is no meriting Cauſe of God's Mercy, or of opening a Door of Hope to us; this is reſerved as the Prerogative of the Satisfaction, Merit, and Righteouſneſs of the dear Lord Jeſus. Repentance and Reformation, Faith and Holineſs, God doth abſolutely and peremptorily require, and certainly work in all that he pardons and ſaves, or in ſpecial Mercy vouchſafes even temporal Deliverance to, and ſuſpends the actual conferring of Saving-Mercy, till theſe are at leaſt ſeminally wrought in Men in Regeneration and effectual Calling, to render them willing to accept of Chriſt, and of Mercy from God through Chriſt, to make Chriſt, and the Mercy of God through him precious, and to fit them rightly, to improve Mercy when they receive it: But he never intended theſe for juſtifying Righteouſneſs; therefore, in preſſing Reformation on our ſelves or others, we muſt be very careful not to truſt in it as our juſtifying Righteouſneſs, or the Cauſe of God's Mercy, but to aſcribe the opening of a Door of Hope to us, only to the free Grace of God, the Merit of Chriſt, and the Faithfulneſs of God in making

good his free and gracious Promiſes, which he hath made to Faith, Repentance, and Reformation.

(IV.) A Fourth general Head to be ſpoken to in handling the Doctrine, is, what a right Reformation vigorouſly carried on, opens a Door of Hope to a People of obtaining; What ſuch People or Perſons may hope to receive from God, of his free Grace and Mercy; which Particulars may, by way of Anticipation, ſerve as Motives to every of us in our places to ſet upon, and to our utmoſt, forward a thorow Reformation in our own and others Hearts and Lives.

(1.) When a People do ſincerely and vigorouſly endeavour their own and others Reformation, and God bleſſes theſe Endeavours, ſo that they take effect, there is a Door of Hope ſet open, that God will remove and turn away his Judgments, which by their Sins they have brought upon themſelves. Repentance and Reformation is a Door of Hope, as it is a Means of God's preſcribing, to prevent Judgments feared and threatned, and to remove ſuch as are actually inflicted on, and felt by a People; thus in the often fore-quoted 7th of *Joſhua*, when *Iſrael* took away the accurſed

accurſed thing, then God removed the Judgment that was upon them, and now the Men of *Ai* fall before them; whom, till then, they could not ſtand before.

(2.) Sincere Attempts and vigorous Endeavours for thorow Reformation, open a Door of Hope of God's vouchſafing his gracious Preſence with a People, even after he was departed from them for their Sins, and his returning to them in Mercy, and that both in Spirituals and Temporals.

(1.) In ſucceeding their Attempts againſt God's and their Enemies, either preventing them, or turning their Hearts, making them to be at Peace with them, or giving them Succeſs againſt them, delivering them out of the Hands of their Enemies; yea, delivering their Enemies into their hands, *Prov.* 16. 17. *Joſh.* 7. 12, and 8. 1, 2. tho' God ſaid, *I will not be with you any more, unleſs the accurſed thing be taken away*; yet when that was done, God ſaith to *Joſhua, Fear not, I have given* Ai *into thy hand.*

(2.) When a People are rightly and thoroughly reformed, it opens a Door of Hope of God's Preſence with them, in

in bleſſing them with able, wiſe, and faithful Counſellours, Rulers and Governours, and bleſſing their Counſels and Government, both for the temporal and ſpiritual good of ſuch a People, *Iſai.* 1. 16,---20, and *ver.* 25, 26. And this is a great Mercy.

(3.) This Reformation opens a Door of Hope to a People, that God will bleſs them with Peace, Plenty, and Succeſs in their Undertakings, ſo far as ſhall be for God's Glory and their good: This ſecond of *Hoſea* proves this, *ver.* 17, 18, 21, 22. When God takes away the Name of *Baalim* out of her Mouth, he makes a Covenant for them with the whole Creation, ſo *Job* 5. 19, ---- to the end.

(4.) It opens a Door of Hope, that God will continue the Goſpel, and Goſpel-Ordinances among them in Power, Purity and Liberty, and his Bleſſing upon them; for they are the Sins of a People that provoke God to remove the Candleſtick, *Rev.* 2. 5. I will remove it, ſaith God, there, except thou repent; which implies, That if they did repent, God would graciouſly continue it, *Iſai.* 55. 7, and 10 to the end.

(5.) True

(5.) True Repentance and Reformation opens a Door of Hope, and is an Evidence, that God is, and will be the God of ſuch a People: Thus *Hoſ.* 2. *v.* 16. Thou ſhalt call me *Iſhi*, my Husband, and *v.* 19, 20. God would betroth them to him in Loving-kindneſs and Faithfulneſs: Their Maker will be their Husband, *Iſai.* 54. 5. and in the laſt Verſe of this ſecond of *Hoſea*, I will ſay to them, Thou art my People, and they ſhall ſay, Thou art my God, and you have heard very well; on a like occaſion to this, that happy is the People whoſe God is the Lord, ſuch have a Door of Hope opened to them large enough, as wide a Door and effectual, as they need or can deſire. I now come to the 5th and laſt thing propoſed, *viz.* the Application.

And the only uſe I ſhall make of this Doctrine, ſhall be of Exhortation: To all that bear the Name of Chriſtians. Seeing when a People have brought themſelves into a Valley of *Achor* by their Sins, a thorow Reformation is a Door of Hope, for obtaining God's gracious Preſence, and Bleſſing both in temporals and ſpirituals. Be ye all prevailed with, to ſet upon and promote

mote this Work of Reformation, both in your own Hearts and Lives, and to the utmoſt of your power, in the Lives, yea, in the Hearts of others; every one of you in your places, all joining Hearts and Hands in it.

(1.) Magiſtrates muſt be exhorted in their places duly, impartially, and vigorouſly, to put in Execution the Laws againſt Sin; yea, and to give all due Incouragement to all ſuch as regularly endeavour to ſtem the ſtrong Tide of Irreligion and Profaneneſs, by bringing to Conviction and legal Puniſhments, ſuch as are guilty of Tipling, Drunkenneſs, Swearing, Uncleanneſs, Sabbath-Profanation, and thoſe things, Perſons, and Places, that are Occaſions of, and Provocations to ſuch Sins. If God ſtir up, and ſpirit Magiſtrates to do their Duty in this Matter, it will be a Door of Hope, of God's continuing and further vouchſafing Mercy to us, and our Land, *Jer.* 5. 1. If you can find a Man that executes Judgment, I will pardon; a Man, *i. e.* a Magiſtrate, or great Man, as *ver.* 5. Bleſſed be God, we are not altogether without this Door of Hope, God having ſtirred up our late Parliament to addreſs to His Majeſty, our Rightful,

Rightful, Gracious, King *William*, to iſſue out his Gracious, Religious Proclamation, for reſtraining and puniſhing Looſneſs and Profaneneſs; and bleſſed be God, that hath inclined our Gracious Sovereign to iſſue out ſuch a Proclamation: But the Execution of ſuch Laws, for reſtraining and puniſhing looſe and profane Perſons and Practices, lies in the Hands, and at the Doors of Inferiour Magiſtrates, ſuch as are Juſtices and Magiſtrates in Corporations. And bleſſed be God, we are not without ſuch in many places, and in this place in particular; and ſo not without this Door of Hope. Magiſtrates therefore muſt be exhorted, prevailed with, and incouraged to go on vigorouſly, impartially, and unwearyedly in this Work.

(2.) And as Magiſtrates, ſo Miniſters are hence to be exhorted, to promote Repentance and Reformation in People, both by their Doctrine, Inſtructions, Reproofs, yea, Diſcipline, keeping Perſons guilty of any Immoralities from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, till they profeſs, and give Evidence of their ſindere Repentance and Reformation. And this the very

Rubrick

Rubrick of the Liturgy gives them power to do, at leaſt for a time, and in order to further Proſecution: And they muſt eſpecially, be ſure to forward this good Work of Reformation, by their burning and ſhining Examples, the peculiar Unblameableneſs, Convincingneſs, Holineſs, and Spirituality of their Converſations; and Miniſters ſhould incourage and ſtrengthen the Hands of their People in vigorous attempting the Reformation of others, as by the ways juſt now mentioned; ſo by inciting them to tell the Church, yea, and the Magiſtrate too, in caſe of Obſtinacy, and this for the good of Offenders, both of their Souls and Bodies; and for the turning away of Judgments, and obtaining Mercies upon the publick.

(3.) Private Perſons are to be exhorted in their ſeveral Stations and Capacities to their utmoſt, to promote the Reformation of evil Manners, and to reſtrain and bring to legal Puniſhment looſe and profane Perſons, in order to their Reformation and the publick good. They muſt promote this good Work by their Prayers, Tears, Counſels, Reproofs and Examples, and when the Offence is groſs, and of publick Scandal,

dal, by telling the Church as a ſpiritual Means to bring them to Repentance; and by applying themſelves alſo to the Magiſtrate for the executing the Laws upon them, in order to the reclaiming the Parties offending, the warning of others, and preventing God's Judgment on the Land and Places where ſuch Sins are commited. Dread not being reproached as Informers: It is one thing to be Informers for filthy Lucre, and againſt Perſons for their Conſcientiouſneſs, and in Matters of Religion, where the difference is not in Fundamental and neceſſary Doctrines, or in Matters of Practice and Worſhip, wherein good Men may differ; there is a great deal of difference between malicious and vexatious Informations and Convictions of that nature; and endeavouring to put good Laws in Execution againſt Profaneneſs and Blaſphemy, and ſuch things as are undeniably ſinful, and provoking, and angering the Sinners themſelves and many others. As the Curſe cauſleſs ſhall not come, ſo you need not fear (and muſt not be frighted from plain Duty, by) groundleſs Slanders and Reproaches. It is no Matter of Reproach, but on the contrary, of inward

ward Satisfaction, and outward Reputation, with all ſerious, yea, ſober Perſons, to be inſtrumental in reſtraining and puniſhing the Impieties of the Age, in order to the reclaiming, yea, poſſibly eternally ſaving the Offenders, honouring and pleaſing God, and ſecuring his Bleſſing upon the publick, which ſhould be your ends in all you do in this way. But I ſhall not further inſiſt on this, nor at all mention ſeveral things which might have been inſtanced in, becauſe it is ſo well and fully done in thoſe many excellent Sermons preached by ſeveral, both Conformiſts and Nonconformiſts to the Societies for Reformation in *London*; and alſo in that Sermon, which you of this Place lately heard, and have alſo now in Print to recur to. All I ſhall therefore further do, is to back this Duty with ſome Motives, and guide it by ſome Directions, for your ſo ordering the Matter, as to open a Door of Hope to your ſelves and the Nation.

They ſhall be fetched from the Text and Context, and the Particulars laid down in the handling of the Doctrine.

(I.) For Motives.

(1.) Con-

(1.) Conſider (as hath been ſhewn in the Doctrinal part) that they are the unreformed Sins of a People that provoke God, and bring down Judgments; theſe bring into a Valley of *Achor*, of great Diſtreſs, and ſhut the Door of Hope of God's gracious Preſence with a People; as therefore you would prevent or remove the Judgments of God, and Tokens of his Diſpleaſure feared or felt, Magiſtrates, Miniſters or People ſhould ſet themſelves every one in their Places vigorouſly, to ſtem the Torrent of Looſneſs and Profaneneſs, and promote the Reformation of the Manners of Men, by furthering the Execution of good Laws for the Reſtraint and Puniſhment of Sin.

(2.) Conſider, the more to ſtir you up to the Duty before you, that the unreformed Sins of a People provoke God, even after he hath begun to ſhew Mercy to them, and opened a Door of Hope; yet to ſhut that Door again, and bring them into a Valley of *Achor*, as hath been proved under the ſecond Propoſition in the Doctrinal part; and may be further proved from *Pſ.* 107. 33, 34. and *Jude* v. 5. Q therefore, as you would not have God thus to deal with

us, do what you can to further the Work of Reformation. God hath open'd to us a Door of Hope many times formerly, but our Sins have ſhut it again; and God hath lately, in a very gracious and peculiarly remarkable manner, opened a Door of Hope again to us, even in a Valley of *Achor*, in bringing, in preſerving, directing and ſucceeding our Gracious Rightful Sovereign King *William*. Was it not a Valley of *Achor* with us, when we were ſo faſt going back to the *Egypt* of Popery and Slavery; but God opened a Door of Hope, delivering us from that *Egypt*, and thoſe Iron-Yokes; but if we remain an unreformed People, God can ſoon ſhut this Door again, and bring us back into a Wilderneſs: Therefore, as you would not have God, after he hath begun to do us good, turn his Hand againſt us, and lead us back into deep Diſtreſſes. Let every one of us ſet our Hands and Hearts to promote this Work of Reformation of Manners God hath ſo graciouſly begun amongſt us, in the great City, and many other places, and to our Comfort, in this place alſo.

(3.) Conſider, (what was alſo told you in the clearing of the Doctrine) that

that this Reformation if right and thorow, will open a Door of Hope of God's Continuance of his gracious Preſence with us, yea, of his reſtoring of it; when, for a People's Sins, he had withdrawn it. Would you have God's Preſence with us in our Land, and the place we live in; O promote this, return to God, this reforming Work, both in your ſelves and others.

(1.) This is the way to have God's Preſence ſo far with a People, as to blaſt the Attempts of God's and their Enemies againſt them, and bleſs them in their Attempts againſt ſuch. We are, praiſed be God, at preſent at Peace, but Enemies both at home and abroad, queſtion-leſs, are and will be at work, and our Peace is like to be but ſhort-liv'd, if God do not keep up in and amongſt us a War againſt our Sins, our worſt Enemies. As ever you would have your Peace continued, the Deſigns and Attempts of Enemies defeated and broken, and our Attempts againſt God's and our enemies ſucceeded, carry on begun Reformation to further Degrees to higher pitches.

(2.) Would you have God's Preſence amongſt us, to bleſs us with able, faith-

ful Counſellours, and bleſs their Counſels? Would you have God's Bleſſing upon publick and Parliamentary Counſels, that under God, the Welfare of the Nation, and the Security of Religion, Laws and Liberties do ſo much depend upon? Would you have it with us as God promiſeth, *Iſai.* 1. 25, 26, that he will give Judges as at the firſt, and Counſellours as at the beginning; then do as they are exhorted to do in the 16th and 17th Verſes of that Chapter, Waſh you, make you clean, put away the Evil of your doings from before his Eyes; ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, carry on Reformation thoroughly.

(3.) This is the way to procure Plenty; it is for the Sins of a People that God ſends Scarcity and Cleanneſs of Teeth, *viz.* for the Abuſe of Plenty by Gluttony, Drunkenneſs, and feeding Men's Luſts. We have had ſome Scarcity, and if God with-hold a Seaſon for the remaining Harveſt, we may yet feel more of that ſore Judgment. O prevent it by doing your utmoſt, to reform the groſs Abuſe of God's Mercies, and all other Sins amongſt us.

(4.) As you would have God's Preſence continued in the Enjoyment of the

the Goſpel, and Goſpel Ordinances, vigorouſly proſecute this Work of Reformation; for they are the unreformed Sins of a People, that provoke God to ſend the worſt ſort of Famine (a far worſe than that which the laſt Head mentioned) a Famine of the Word of the Lord, *Amos* 8. 3, 9, 10, 11, 12. All this is threatned for the Sin of Sabbath-Profanation, *ver.* 5, 6.

(5.) Would you have God to be our God, our Husband; our Land married to him, and us to be his People, his peculiar Treaſure further this Work of Reformation, do as *Iſrael* is directed, *Hoſ.* 2. 2. and as it is promiſed ſhe ſhould do, *ver.* 7. Put away our Sins, and our Iniquities far from us, and return we to our firſt Husband, and uſe all the Advantages and Means you have for forwarding others doing ſo.

(II.) I now come very briefly to ſpeak by way of Direction, to all thoſe that are ingaged in, or wiſh well to the carrying on this Work of Reformation, and ſhew what it is, that the Attempts for Reformation of Manners, give Hopes of in themſelves, and others, which if they do produce, will open a Door of Hope of God's Preſence amongſt, and Bleſſing with us.

(1.) These Attempts for Reformation give Hope, That they who attempt the reforming of others, and restraining and punishing the loose and wicked Practices of others, their Drunkenness, Swearing, Uncleanness, Sabbath-Profanation, *&c.* ---- will be very careful to keep themselves from the Guilt and Practice of these Sins, yea, to keep very far from an evil Matter, from all Appearances, and Occasions of these Sins, vain Words, tipling, sitting with any loose Companions, and the like. As you would have your Attempts for Reformation be a Door of Hope, look very carefully to your own Conversations. If Magistrates, that should punish these Sins, be guilty of them themselves, how should it be expected that they should punish others, or that what they do in it, should reform others, while they by their evil Example, harden them in the very Sins they punish them for. If Ministers preach against these Sins, and yet allowedly commit them, they are more like to draw Men into Sin by such their wretched Practice, than to reform and turn Men from Sin by their Doctrine: And so private Persons, if they prosecute others, and are guilty of the same Sins themselves, how can they hope

hope to be inſtrumental in reforming others. ---- Then will Endeavours for Reformation be a Door of Hope, when they begin in thoſe Perſons themſelves that promote it in others.

(2.) Attempts to reform the evil Manners of others, do give Hopes that all ingaged in this Work, will endeavour not only to keep from theſe groſs Sins, puniſhable by the Laws of Men, but even from all Sin whatſoever; from every thing that may give juſt Offence and Scandal, and cauſe Men to reproach Religion and the Profeſſours of it; ſuch as are Pride, indulging unruly Paſſions, Injuſtice, deceiving, over-reaching in our Dealings, making no Conſcience of Mens Words in buying and ſelling, in making good our Promiſes, and paying of juſt Debts as far as able; yea, Hardneſs and Uncharitableneſs in their Dealings: Theſe things Men do oft' charge Profeſſours with; ſee that you give not any, no not the leaſt juſt ground for ſuch Charges: But be very juſt in your Dealings, true to your Word and Promiſes, yea, merciful and compaſſionate, as you would have your Endeavours for reforming the groſs Sins of others effectual, and to open a Door of Hope to our Land.

(3.) Mens Attempts to reform the Manners of others, give ground of Hope, that they will vigorously endeavour to reform in themselves even Heart-sins, and the inward as well as outward Acts of Sin. I am sure it should ingage you to this, and to set upon the conscientious, religious Performance of Duties; of Family-duties daily, Morning and Evening-Prayer, and Praises, and reading the Scriptures in your Families, and frequent instructing and catechising those under your Charge, and to see to secret Duties, and to Sabbath-sanctification, in Attendance on publick Ordinances and in Family and Closet-duties of divine Institution, and Acts of Worship, as well as abstaining from positive Sabbath-profanation, by Thoughts, Words or Actions about worldly Employments or Recreations. Yea, we justly hope, and expect from you, that you will endeavour after Heart-holiness, after true Grace and growth in, and Exercise of it, as well as keeping up the Form of Godliness, and the outward part of Religion, in your Conversation before Men. As ever you desire your Attempts for the Reformation of others, may open a Door of Hope of God's

Mercy

Mercy to the Land, ſee that you ſet upon this thorow-heart and Life-Reformation in your ſelves.

(4.) The attempting, and eſpecially the effecting the Reformation of the looſe and profane Manners of Men, gives hopes in relation to thoſe whoſe Reformation you ſeek, that it may, through God's gracious Bleſſing upon, and ſetting in with it, bring them to ſound Converſion to Faith in Chriſt, and a reform and change of the Heart; this you ſhould aim at, pray for, and preſs, that outward Reformation may be a ſtep in them to this thorow and inward Work, and to the ſetting upon the Duties of Religion, and getting rid of that Hardneſs of Heart, which their profane Practices had ſo deeply riveted. Tho' outward Reformation may remove at preſent, ſome outward Judgments, or at leaſt, reprieve from the preſent full Execution of them, yet nothing can ſecure God's gracious, ſaving Preſence, but Faith in Chriſt accompanied with, and evidenced by Conſcience of Duties of our general and particular Calling, Exerciſe of Grace and Holineſs of Heart. In all your Attempts to amend the Manners of others, endeavour to promote this

thorow

thorow Heart-deep Reformation, pray for this, preſs to it. And you that are reformed from, or have not been guilty of, thoſe groſs Sins of Swearing, Drunkenneſs, Uncleanneſs, Sabbath-profanation, and other ſuch like enormous Crimes, but are brought to Civility, and moral Honeſty, yet ſee that you reſt not in this, no, nor in any thing ſhort of Chriſt, an Intereſt in him by a true living Faith, and a thorow Work of Grace, and the Practice of Holineſs in Heart and Life: For tho' outward Reformation, a civil ſober Converſation, and moral Honeſty be commendable, and your indiſpenſible Duty, without which, you can have no Evidence of the Truth of Grace, whatever your Profeſſion and Performances may be; yet if you go no further, ſuch a partial Reformation will never prove ſaving to your own Souls; nay, meer Civility, Morality, yea, Gifts and external Performances *reſted in*, are like to prove hindrances of ſound Converſion: Hence Chriſt tells the Scribes and Phariſees, *Mat.* 21. 31. That Publicans and Harlots repenting and believing, went into the Kingdom of God before them who ſtayed and truſted in their Phariſaical Righteouſneſs. Promote there-

therefore outward Reformation, but alſo to your utmoſt, preſs and forward thorow-converſion in others. Let Miniſters preſs this on People, and let private Chriſtians preſs this too in their places; and you who are more particularly ingaged in this good reforming Work, do you preſs on thoſe Sinners you have to do with, to this thorow Reformation, to Faith in Chriſt, the Practice of Religion, and the Power of Godlineſs. This is the way to make Reformation a Door of Hope of God's Saving mercy to your Souls, and of his gracious Preſence with the Land, and the Churches of Chriſt in it.

(5.) Endeavours for Reformation of Manners, are a Door of Hope, as the joining together of ſerious, ſober, and religious Perſons (tho' differing in their Perſwaſions in ſome leſſer Matters) in this Work, gives hopes of uniting them in Love and Affection one to another, and ſo far as they have attained walking by the ſame Rule, and minding the ſame thing, *Phil.* 3. 16. and bearing with each other where there may be ſome difference in Judgment and Practice, while they agree in the main, in all neceſſary things in Doctrine and Worſhip, and the Practice of Holineſs.

When

When Diviſions are healed, Animoſities, Cenſoriouſneſs and Uncharitableneſs laid aſide, there will be a Door of Hope opened, that we ſhall enjoy the gracious Preſence of God and his Bleſſing upon us, in our perſonal and more private, and in our National and Church-Capacity: Now joining together in promoting Reformation, is a likely Means to this deſireable Chriſtian-Union of Affections; for one great Cauſe of differences is the Prejudices in Mens minds againſt one another, occaſioned by Strangeneſs, and not converſing together; but when ſober Religious Perſons join in promoting Reformation, and ſee that they drive on the ſame good and holy ends, it breeds better Thoughts of one another. Therefore labour to ſet open, and keep open this Door of Hope, *viz.* Union in the main, among all that fear God, tho' differing in ſome leſſer Matters; for truly there is nothing that ſhuts the Door of Hope againſt us more, than the Diviſions, Heart-burnings, and Animoſities, among thoſe that agree in the Eſſentials and Fundamentals of Doctrine, Worſhip, and Chriſtian Practice: Oh then, as you would have the Reformation that is ſet on

foot,

ſort, be a Door of Hope, pray for and promote the healing of the Diviſions among Perſons, profeſſing the ſame Truth and Godlineſs; endeavour to preſerve the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, ſpeaking the Truth in Love, *Eph.* 4. 3, 15. Speak the Truth, and contend earneſtly for the Faith (*Jude* v. 3.) yet ſpeak it in Love. Put not the worſt Conſtruction on Mens Words and Actions; but put the beſt Interpretation upon doubtful Expreſſions, and Actions, that they will admit of, eſpecially when in other places and at other times, they explain what was poſſibly at firſt delivered, ſo as to be ſomewhat liable to Exception. Faſten not upon Men Conſequences of Doctrine, which they never intended, nor ever ſaw in them: Men may ſhew the true Conſequences of Doctrines, but ſhould not charge the Perſons with intending and embracing thoſe Conſequences, which they renounce: Thus heartily deſire and endeavour to reform and heal the lamentable, ſinful, miſchievous, and very threatning Diviſions among Profeſſors of the ſame Religion, and ſerious in their Profeſſion of Godlineſs. This would be a Door of Hope indeed.

(6.) And

(6.) And laſtly, Endeavours for Reformation of Manners, will be a Door of Hope when they do (as to be ſure they ſhould) excite all thoſe that are God's People to be more eminent in the Profeſſion of Religion and Godlineſs, more lively in every Grace, more ready to and in ever good Work, when by ſeeing Sinners reformed from Acts of Profaneneſs, true Saints are excited to more eminent Degrees of Holineſs, to greater Exemplarineſs of Converſation, to repair their Decays in Grace, to reform their Pride, and their too great Conformity to the Spirit of the World, then (to allude to that paſſage, 1 *Cor.* 16 9) a great Door and effectual of Hope will be opened upon us, as to the Continuance of God's gracious Preſence with us: And this ſhould be a ſpur to Saints to great Circumſpection in their walk, and greater Fruitfulneſs in every good Word and Work; for truly the Unreformedneſs of Profeſſours, their Pride, Formality, Decays in Grace, conformity to the world, their covetous, ſelfiſh frame of Spirit, their loſing their Zeal, and leaving much of their firſt Love, doth as much ſhut the Door of Hope, as any other ſins, even the ſins of profane Perſons, *Rev.* 2. 5. Therefore all you that are Profeſſours

of

of more than ordinary Strictneſs in Religion, while you would reform the Drunkenneſs, Swearing, Filthineſs, and Sabbath-profanation of groſs Sinners, and ſee them in ſome degree reformed: For ſhame, do you reform your Pride of Heart and Life, your Conformity to the Cuſtoms, the gariſh Faſhions and Dreſſes of the world; that Pride that teſtifies to the Face of many Profeſſours both Men and Women; Womens high Heads, and Mens flanting Perukes, that hide their Faces, as if they were aſhamed, (as well indeed they may in ſuch effeminate Dreſſes) to ſhew them, and make them look as out of a Priſon-grate; ſo likewiſe, the Worldlineſs and Selfiſhneſs of Profeſſours, is much to be bewailed, and ſhould be with the greateſt Vigour reformed. If you would do as the Church of *Epheſus* is by Chriſt directed to do, *Rev.* 2. 5. remember from whence you are fallen, and repent, and do your firſt Works, it would be a Door of Hope. If while you deſire and attempt to break the Knots of Swearing, Tipling, revelling Companions, you would alſo improve your Meetings together, and your friendly Viſits, to ſpiritual Purpoſes, to the ſharpening and advancing Grace mutually, to the provoking

voking one another to love and good Works, *Heb.* 10. 24. to the exhorting one another daily, while it is called *to day*, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin, *Heb.* 3. 13. to the lifting up of weak Hands and feeble Knees, *Heb.* 12. 12. to the building up one another in our most holy Faith; this would open a Door of Hope indeed. Be prevailed with therefore all of you, especially such as profess strictness, and such as ingage in this good and necessary Work of Reformation of Manners, labour to follow these Directions; and then tho your and others Sins may have brought us and the Nation, in some respects, into a Valley of *Achor*, on account of Afflictions and Distresses; yet if it thus prove a Valley of *Achor*, in regard of Humiliation, and thorow effectual Reformation above described and prefsed, it will be a comfortable blessed Door of Hope to us, that God will yet dwell among us, and be our God, and that we shall be his People.

FINIS.